

STATE'S STRATEGIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES	4.12(d)
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(1) To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities.

The goals and strategies below are based on the results of the triennial assessment conducted in 2006, public input, federal standards and indicators, recommendations from the State Rehabilitation Council and NDVR's Managing for Results Strategic Planning. They are designed to support achievement of VR's goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.12 (c)(1).

Notations are made by the goals that include innovation, expansion and improvement of services and/or outreach activities.

Some strategies support achievement of more than one of VR's goals.

Goal 1: Achieve 361 Employer-Initiated Contacts.

Strategy 1.1 - Continue emphasis on the Business Services Initiative and support partnerships with business, industry and/or labor as appropriate.

Strategy 1.2 - Continue to develop networks with state economic development authorities and other employment entities at the state and regional offices.

Strategy 1.3 – Expand contacts with Agri-businesses throughout the state.

Strategy 1.4 - Continue to establish and monitor annual Business Services performance measures.

Goal 2: Develop An Integrated Public Education/Awareness Campaign On VR Services And Disability-Related Issues By September 30, 2007.
Innovation/Expansion and Outreach

Strategy 2.1 - Work with the State Rehabilitation Council and its Public Relations Committee to expand public education and information activities.

Strategy 2.2 - Continue to establish and monitor annual Business Services performance measures.

Strategy 2.3 - Continue to develop networks with state economic development authorities and other employment entities at the state and regional offices.

Goal 3: Implement Strategies 3.1 – 3.7 To Maintain Collaboration With Partners Under The Workforce Investment Act And Related Agencies.

Strategy 3.1 – *Expand the Rural Services Initiative throughout the State and monitor the newly signed MOU with the ND Agriculture Department.*

Strategy 3.2 - *Continue to participate as members of the Workforce Development Council, subcommittees and workgroups.*

Strategy 3.3 – *Update the MOU with the Workforce Development Council by the due date.*

Strategy 3.4 - *Continue to develop networks with state economic development authorities and other employment entities at the state and regional offices.*

Strategy 3.5 - *Support expanded relationships between vocational rehabilitation regional offices and centers for independent living.*

Strategy 3.6 - *Plan a joint Vocational Rehabilitation/Independent Living Conference to be held within the next two years.*

Strategy 3.7 - *Continue involvement with statewide Transportation Committee.*

Goal 4: Identify Transition service needs in 100% of the Regional offices, in coordination with regional partners across the state.

Expand and Improve

Strategy 4.1- *Continue participation as a member of the Statewide Transition Steering Council.*

Strategy 4.2 - *Work with the chair of the Statewide Transition Steering Council to identify roles of both the State and Regional Steering Councils.*

Strategy 4.3 – *Update the MOU with Transition partners.*

Strategy 4.4 – *Initiate annual contacts with disability support staff from the North Dakota University System.*

Goal 5: Meet federal Standard 1 – Employment Outcomes.

Strategy 5.1 - *Evaluate performance in meeting the federal Standards and Performance Indicators and take necessary action to improve performance that does not meet the standards.*

Goal 6: Meet Federal Standard 2 – Service Rate To Minorities.

Expand/Improve/Outreach

Strategy 6.1 - *Schedule meetings with 121 Projects at least twice per year.*

Strategy 6.2 - *Continue to provide technical assistance and support to the four 121 Projects.*

Strategy 6.3 - *Support participation in training opportunities to increase cultural awareness and understanding of minority populations.*

Goal 7: Establish And Monitor Statewide And Regional Strategic Plan Goals That Are Focused On Employment Results.

Expand and Improve

Strategy 7.1 – *Each quarter, evaluate performance in statewide and regional employment goals. Take action to improve performance where necessary.*

Strategy 7.2 - *Identify internal tracking system to monitor self-employment practices.*

Strategy 7.3 - *Review Vocational Guidance and Counseling services during case review process. Provide feedback and training as necessary.*

Strategy 7.4 - *Explore contracting with an outside entity to evaluate supported employment and job coaching services.*

Goal 8: Continue To Meet The CSPD Goal That All VR Counselors And Regional Administrators Will Meet The Qualified Rehabilitation Professional Standards Within 5 Years Of Hire.

Strategy 8.1 - *Financially support staff in attaining Qualified Rehabilitation Professional status.*

Strategy 8.2 - *Monitor staff progress in achieving Qualified Rehabilitation Professional status to ensure staff achieve within the time frame.*

Goal 9: Continue To Enhance Assistive Technology Efforts By Achieving 100% Of Strategies 9.1 – 9.5.

Expand and Improve

Strategy 9.1 – Assess and upgrade the assistive technology lab located in the Bismarck regional VR office

Strategy 9.2 – Establish an assistive technology lab in the Grand Forks regional VR office.

Strategy 9.3 – Monitor use of the AT screening tool during the case review process and provide feedback and training as necessary.

Strategy 9.4 – Maintain membership in the Interagency Project for Assistive Technology (IPAT) Consumer Advisory Council.

Strategy 9.5 - Maintain participation in the statewide Partners in Assistive Technology project.

(2) To Carry Out Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities

In North Dakota, 7.6% of the population is comprised of minorities. Native Americans are the largest of these minority groups at 4.9%. During FFY 05 of all the individuals who became employed through VR services, 7.2% were minorities.

The breakdown of minorities employed during FFY 05 is as follows: 5.1% were Native Americans, 0.8% Black, 1.0% Hispanic and 0.7% Asian. (Note: the sum of these percentages does not equal the total percentage since people are now able to select more than one race.) It is anticipated that these figures will be similar or higher during this next year.

There are also four Section 121 Projects for Native Americans operating in the state. Both the state and regional vocational rehabilitation offices provide technical assistance to the 121 projects, as requested. These four programs are also served by the Client Assistance Program. In addition to providing technical assistance, vocational rehabilitation has itinerant counselors who visit the reservations to work together with the projects to provide services otherwise not available, or to meet with those individuals who prefer to work with vocational rehabilitation. Vocational rehabilitation also coordinates off reservation services for individuals and invites 121 Project staff to any training activities coordinated through our office.

During the summer of 2005 one of the 121 projects serving North Dakota ran out of funding prior to the end of the fiscal year. VR assisted the 121 project in meeting short-term client needs through Services to Groups.

As described in *Attachment 4.12(a)*, one aspect of the triennial assessment of rehabilitation needs included three separate Focus Groups focusing on Native Americans and their rehabilitation needs. VR is in the process of sharing the results of these Focus Groups with the 121 Project Directors.

Goal 6, Strategies 6.1 – 6.3 in the preceding section (1) identify additional activities related to outreach and services to minorities and *Goal 7, Strategy 7.4* is specific to supported employment services. VR has also developed additional strategies to improve performance on Standard 2, Service Rate to Minorities.

(3) *To Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.*

No major barriers to equitable access and participation have been identified by individuals with disabilities in either the state VR services or supported employment services programs. All individuals closed from VR receive a survey, which is designed to solicit feedback on their level of satisfaction with their participation in decision-making, the services they received, their employment, if applicable, as well as anything additional they would like to comment on. All surveys mailed during FFY 05 and prior included a question related to accessing services. Surveys results are shared with the regional offices and the Rehabilitation Council.

Assistive Technology: Vocational rehabilitation continues to support assistive technology as an integral part of each stage of the VR process. An assistive technology screening tool continues to be used throughout the state during the intake process with all individuals applying for services. When assistive technology needs are identified further assessment and/or referral are provided as necessary.

Goal 9, Strategies 9.1 – 9.5 in the preceding section (1) identify additional activities related to assistive technology.

Community Rehabilitation Programs: The results of the statewide survey of VR staff regarding Community Rehabilitation Programs is discussed in *Attachment 4.12(a)*. Training needs related to improving services were identified and will be shared with the CRP RCEP. In addition, VR will look at creating in-state training that would provide a general overview of vocational rehabilitation services that could be provided to new CRP staff. See *Attachment 4.12(a)* for further information.